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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of teachers to see whether they meet state competency standards or should be considered for merit pay is usually limited to making sure they achieve a minimum level of performance and does not involve determining how their performance can be improved if they exhibit higher levels of competence. In Georgia's Fulton County, Mountain Park Elementary School established a 3-year program for evaluating teachers and encouraging their professional development. In the program's first year, all teachers were observed and evaluated by the principal using the state's official teacher evaluation instrument. During this first year each teacher worked with the principal to set goals, was observed four times, and participated in four followup conferences during which the teacher's performance in state-designated competency areas was discussed. Tenured teachers meeting the state standards worked with the principal to develop individualized supervision and professional development plans to be followed in subsequent years. Nontenured teachers and those not meeting standards repeated the first year of the program. Teachers not meeting standards after 3 years were terminated. The program's success depends on maintaining positive relations between teachers and principals and on keeping open the option for revising the program. (PGD)

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A Comprehensive Program of Evaluation And Professional Development: A Working Model

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Abstract

Strong experienced teachers need to be offered a variety of supervisory approaches designed to help them attain a stage of professional development which may be well above most levels identified by supervisory processes designed to evaluate minimum competency. This stage of professional development may also be higher than the observing supervisor's, but by individualizing the approach, both the teacher and the supervisor may design a plan that is superior to the program which is supplied by the state or system, or which relies solely on the expertise of the observing supervisor.

Mountain Park Elementary School in Fulton County, Georgia, has developed a differentiated supervision program for their classroom teachers. During the first year of the plan, the entire faculty is observed by the principal and evaluated using the state assessment instrument. The results of this first year's evaluation provide the design for the second year of the program. Truly competent teachers are provided with an opportunity to participate in various types of supervisory programs that provide a source of continuous professional development, while the non-tenured and less proficient teachers follow a supervisory program built around the areas of need identified in the prior year's evaluation.

A Comprehensive Program of Evaluation
And Professional Development: A Working Model

Legislators, parents, business leaders and school administrators view teacher performance as a crucial element in quality education. These groups have placed emphasis upon the improvement of teacher performance. This interest has resulted in three major thrusts: (1) upgrading the quality of teachers completing college preparatory programs, (2) strengthening state licensing or certification requirements, and (3) administering an on-the-job assessment to both new and experienced teachers. The latter movement constitutes an area of both controversy and promise.

On-the-job assessment of teacher performance often requires the use of a local school, a system, or a state set of criteria by which to measure the performance of the teacher. The criteria may include sections on: planning of instruction, methods of instructional delivery, use of evaluation materials and records, communication skills, classroom management skills, and professional responsibilities. The person evaluating the teacher generally rates the teacher's performance using a scale. The typical key includes the following scores: (1) satisfactory; (2) needs improvement; (3) unsatisfactory; (4) does not apply. Some criteria vary, and some rating scales

have more variety, but often the evaluation form is completed annually as presented above.

This annual evaluation exercise, although sometimes frightening for the beginning teacher, is not difficult; and the majority of teachers complete the requirement with satisfactory scores. Most college teacher preparation programs include such an exercise during the student teaching or internship experience, and many students complete the assignment with ease. Few rating scales or supervisory programs differentiate between the minimally competent teacher who would be given satisfactory scores and the truly master teacher who would also be evaluated as "satisfactory".

As states examine various types of merit pay and career ladder approaches, evaluation and supervision have gained greater meaning. Previously, length of service and degree status have been the primary factors influencing compensation. Now, it appears that supervision becomes even more critical when the reward system is linked to the evaluation process. A system designed to determine minimal competency may be only a minor part of the supervision program necessary to not only encourage the mediocre and beginning teachers, but also to recognize and challenge the talented veteran. A differentiated supervision program is needed which will:

*Approach evaluation systematically;

*Build around an individual teacher's indentified strengths and weaknesses;

*Allow the weak teacher to grow by providing him/her with the direction, resources and support necessary to overcome weaknesses;

*Challenge the talented veteran teacher who may possess stronger teaching skills than the supervisor; and

*Provide growth for those teachers who excel with little supervision (Glatthorn, 1984).

Strong, experienced teachers need to be offered a variety of supervisory approaches designed to help them attain a stage of professional development which may be well above most levels identified by supervisory processes designed to evaluate minimum competency. This stage of professional development may also be higher than the observing supervisors, but by individualizing the approach, both the teacher and the supervisor may design a plan that is superior to a program which is supplied by the state or system, or which relies solely on the expertise of the observing supervisor.

A Model for Differentiated Supervision Program

Mountain Park Elementary School in Fulton County, Georgia, has initiated a differentiated supervision program for their eighteen classroom teachers. This model is designed to take three years to implement fully. During the first year, the entire faculty is observed by the principal and evaluated using the state instrument, the Teacher Performance Assessment

Instrument (TPAI) (Capie, 1980), and the correlate system form. The results of this first year evaluation provide the design for the second year of the program. Truly competent teachers are provided with an opportunity to participate in various types of supervisory programs, while the non-tenured and teachers experiencing difficulties follow a supervisory program built around the areas of need identified in the prior year's evaluation. The third year provides the latter group with an opportunity to improve and eventually participate fully in the supervisory process while the talented veteran pursues the supervisory approach appropriate for the next stage of their professional growth. Figure 1 is a diagram of this model in operation.

Steps in Implementing A Differentiated Supervision Plan

During the first year of this plan at Mountain Park Elementary School, a differentiated supervision program was presented to the entire faculty. Each teacher received a handbook describing an overview of the entire supervisory process, specific descriptions of the five phases in the first year, copies of all forms that would be used, and a copy of the observation instrument, Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI). Well in advance of the implementation date, several faculty meetings were devoted to the explanation of these materials, and the principal was readily available for

discussion.

The five phases included in the first year of the plan were:

1. Goal-setting Conference.

   The teacher and the principal worked together to identify goals for the teacher to accomplish during the school year including descriptors that specifically identified activities and resources required to meet the identified goals.

2. Observation and Follow-up Conference.

   Based on a written lesson plan and observation of a class period, teacher performance was assessed by the principal on teaching plans and materials, classroom procedures, and interpersonal skills through the administration of the TPAI. During the follow-up conference the principal and the teacher discussed the teacher's performance on each competency assessed in the TPAI. If areas were identified that needed improvement, the principal and the teacher cooperatively developed a written plan for improvement that included resource people, staff development courses, and dates for follow-up observations. The teacher received a copy of the written plan.

3. Observation and Follow-up Conference. (same format as #2)

4. Observation and Follow-up Conference. (same format as #2)
5. Observation and Follow-up Conference.

   The fourth observation followed the same format as the previous observations and conferences; however, this final observation served as a summative evaluation providing a basis for the design of the second year of the supervision program.

Based on the assessment in the first year of the program, differentiated modes of supervision were designed for individual teachers to pursue in the second year of the plan. Tenured teachers receiving "Satisfactory" ratings on all competences assessed in the TPAI were offered a plan of supervision designed to meet their needs and interests that provides a source of continuous professional development. The teachers and the principal designed several different models of supervision and decided which type would be most beneficial to the growth of each teacher. Some suggested models for selection were:

1. Goal-setting.

   The principal observes only during classroom activities that are relevant to the goals set in the goal-setting conference at the beginning of the year, working cooperatively with the teacher to meet those goals.

2. Cooperative Supervision.

   Teachers work in collegial supervisory teams collecting data while observing in each team members' classroom and analyzing that data in post-conferences with team members.

3. Clinical Supervision.

   The teacher chooses to continue in the highly structured supervisory relationship with the principal.

4. Data-based Evaluation.

   The teacher selects to design or locate instruments that will assess teacher effectiveness from several different sources (students, peers, parents, administrator, self, etc.).

5. A hybrid of the above types of any other types that the teacher and/or principal may design.

Each teacher specifically designs the chosen model including objectives to be met, activities designed to meet those objectives, and a schedule for meeting with the principal to discuss progress made in the selected design of supervision.

Non-tenured teachers and those teachers who experienced difficulty on any competency in the prior year's assessment follow the highly structured clinical supervision model focusing on the areas of assessed need. The principal continues to serve as the observing supervisor providing a plan for improvement which includes frequent observations, specific feedback on teaching performance, and recommended resources.

Tenured teachers who need improvement in some area may follow the differentiated model of supervision when they demonstrate mastery in all areas of the TPAI. Non-tenured teachers are offered the differentiated model beginning the first year of tenure, assuming that mastery has been demonstrated on all competencies of the TPAI. Teachers who continue to experience difficulty in demonstrating teaching competencies will be reviewed for possible termination procedures.

The guidelines established in the second year will be followed in subsequent years of supervision planning, enabling non-tenured and deficit teachers to improve their teaching performance and eventually join the differentiated supervision program. Meanwhile, competent teachers along with the principal will continue to develop their own mode of supervision. Every three years, teachers in the differentiated supervision plan will be re-assessed using the TPAI.

Of the eighteen teachers assessed in the first year of this program at Mountain Park Elementary School, twelve tenured teachers demonstrated mastery in all competencies of the TPAI, two tenured teachers were deficit in one or more competencies, and of the four non-tenured teachers, two were deficit in one or more areas. Three new teachers will join the staff next fall, beginning the supervision program in the first cycle of the model. Thus, twelve strong, experienced teachers will follow modes of supervision designed to provide continuous growth for their individual needs while the principal works closely with the remaining nine teachers requiring the clinical supervision model.

Reactions and Recommendations

Throughout the first year of this program, faculty reaction was noted by the principal during faculty meetings, individual teacher conferences, and from a questionnaire administered at the end of the year. Initially, the teachers were very apprehensive about the program, more specifically, afraid of an observation instrument that explicitly stated which teacher competencies should be demonstrated during the evaluation process. As the teachers grew more comfortable with the instrument and with the principal's observations, anxiety seemed to subside, and a greater awareness of quality teaching emerged. Once the faculty realized the observations were being conducted in a positive tone, the instrument was reasonable, and the principal could be trusted to "pull no surprises", they fully accepted the program and indicated excitement about the prospects of a differentiated supervision program specifically designed with them in mind.

In small schools, like Mountain Park Elementary School, the role of supervisor falls totally on the shoulders of the principal. Along with the myriad of other duties, the amount of time available to the principal to devote to a project such as this one is limited. Small schools must increase the number of individuals involved in the supervisory process, not only to assist the principal in this task, but to provide an objective and fair supervision and evaluation program. Next year

the principal of this school plans to develop a supervisory team composed of the principal and two expert peer teachers. This three member team will serve as supervisors in the clinical supervision model for non-tenured and deficit teachers. It is hoped that by using this approach, the capacity to supervise teachers by providing additional time and expertise will strengthen the supervision and evaluation functions of the school. Multiple observers will also remove individual bias from the process.

Keys to Successful Implementation

Several factors are critical to the success of this supervision and evaluation plan. In introducing the model, much care must be taken to reduce the anxiety level of the faculty members. The faculty should be given ample time to become familiar with the process and the instruments involved. Detailed materials and discussion related to the process are best introduced the year before the anticipated implementation date. Communication must be clear and direct. The evaluator/supervisor must be available for frequent discussion. Rumors distort perceptions of the teachers and evaluation rumors are frightening, particularly to the inexperienced or new faculty member.

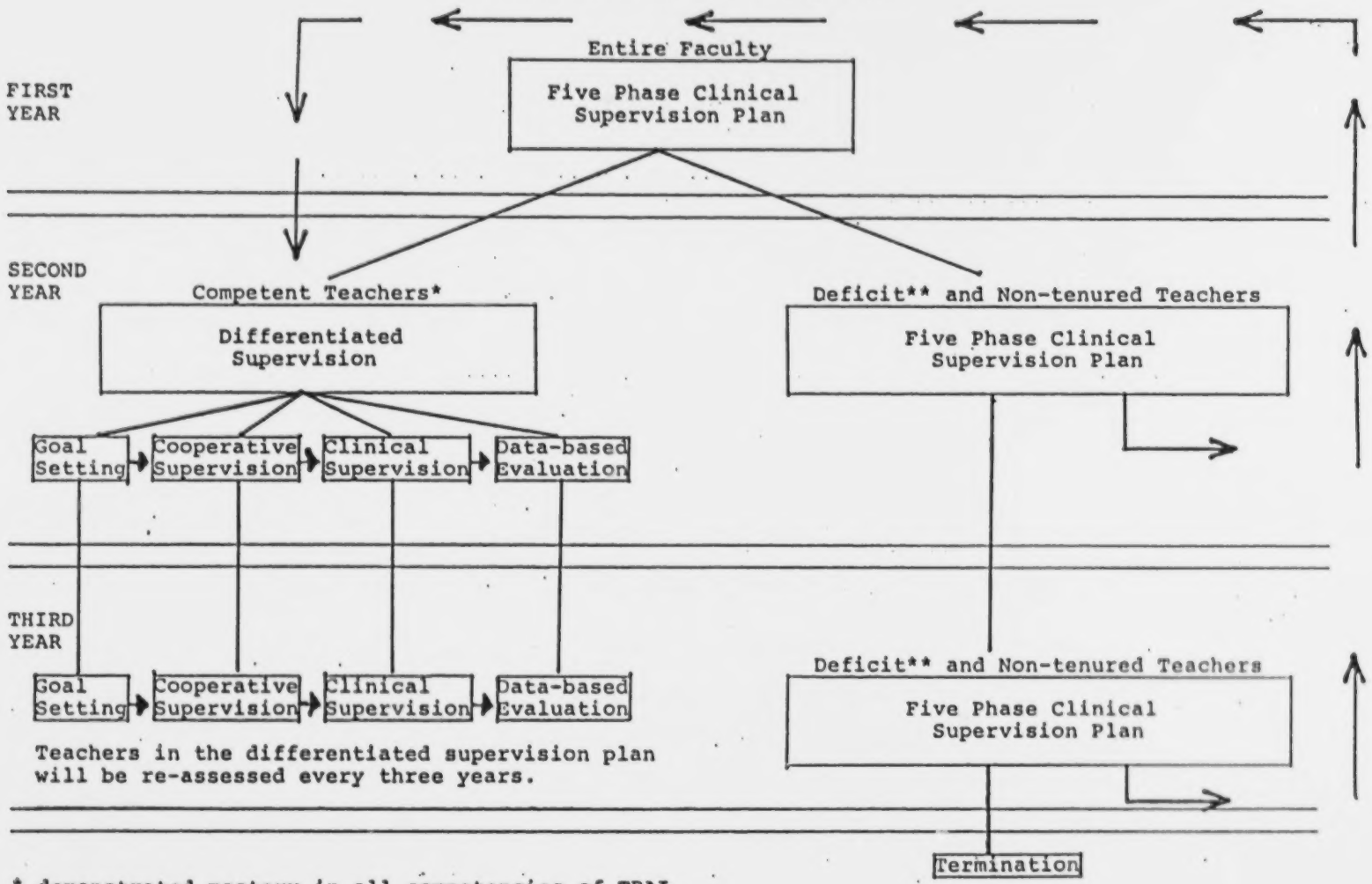
In an elementary school, such as the one where this model was tested, the principal is usually the person completing the

process. Previous supervisory experiences at the school will have had an important impact on the introduction of this model. The faculty must believe the principal will not ask them to do anything unfair or unreasonable.

Continual revisions in this program are important to the vitality and improvement of the differentiated supervision program. Each school must integrate the model and program into their unique setting. The result should be the improvement of teaching. The inexperienced and weak teachers will be assisted in reaching achievable goals, and the outstanding teachers will design their own challenges, thus making the process truly reflect individual strengths and needs.

The support and encouragement of the cadre of existing teachers will decrease the workload of the principal. Turnover of faculty should decrease and morale should improve. All principals dream of starting the school year with a school staffed with master teachers who are highly motivated. This differentiated supervision program may be the first step in realizing the dream.

Figure 1. Model For Differentiated Supervision
At Mountain Park Elementary School



* demonstrated mastery in all competencies of TPAI
** deficit in one or more competencies of TPAI

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